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OPENING REMARKS\*

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I welcome you to the 1979 Annual Health Conference. Traditionally my remarks should be bland and brief. I shall depart from tradition to express some of my concerns.

We have come almost full circle in the area of health care. After years of steadily increasing funding for what became a sacred cause, sparked as it was by the explosion of biomedical knowledge, it was perceived that we were on the brink of unlimited therapeutic powers. Although never stated, it was almost implied that we could offer all manner of medical care and the assurance of good health for all. It is now clear that even were we able to do all this we would be obliged to spend perhaps the major part of our income.

We must now review our priorities for health care in the light of what it costs and what we are willing to pay. As a practising physician I am concerned that major decisions are made in the heat of fiscal crisis and that long-term planning seems to be put off for the expedient need of the moment. In addition, I am troubled by the displacement of the practising

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physician, who is involved in the day-to-day care of the sick, by those to whom health care is an abstraction. No one group knows the answers to all these complex issues and perhaps in 1979 there are no definitive answers. I would hope that caution would be exercised to assure that the neediest be looked after, that where high quality of care exists it be preserved and extended, and that some of the unmet challenges, such as long-term care, be provided for. Finally, I would plead for the possibility of diversity rather than simplistic national solutions.